

# **Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan 2015**

## **Neighborhoods and Districts Assessment**



City of Eau Claire Wisconsin

## Neighborhoods and Districts Assessment

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## Neighborhoods and Districts Assessment

This chapter provides an overview of housing conditions in the central neighborhoods of Eau Claire and summarizes recent plans prepared by the City for those areas.

### Major Neighborhood Issues

These issues are shared among the older neighborhoods of Eau Claire.

1. **Level of Effort:** What level of municipal effort should be devoted to helping improve the older neighborhoods? Should the City devote an extra measure of effort to the older neighborhoods compared to the newer areas?
2. **Roles of the City and the Private Sector:** What is the appropriate role for the City in neighborhood revitalization? Should the task of rehabilitation and reinvestment be left to property owners while the City maintains the infrastructure and provides normal City services? To what extent should (or can) the City enlist the assistance of private businesses, foundations and not-for-profit corporations?
3. **Should the City take special steps to encourage Neighborhood reinvestment and rehabilitation?** The City has been investing in streets, parks and downtown redevelopment, but should there be funds allocated to specifically leverage private reinvestment?
4. **Which, if any, locations would be acceptable for new multiple-family housing?** Sometimes, an increase in housing density is necessary to make redevelopment economically feasible.
5. **What can be done to encourage owner-occupancy of houses, either existing or new.** The rate of home ownership has been falling in the central neighborhoods, and that sometimes leads to dis-investment and other problems.
6. **What should be done to preserve neighborhood character during change?** This may include density, housing type, land use patterns, historic preservation and architectural style.
7. **Should the City provide a higher level of service in the older neighborhoods?** These may include plowing alleys, additional street lighting, additional police surveillance, etc.
8. **What should the City do to encourage the re-use of major obsolescent buildings in the neighborhoods?** This may include old churches that are no longer used for religious purposes.

- 9. Should a neighborhood non-profit development corporation be created to assist in neighborhood revitalization?** This could be a private company with financial assistance from the City and major corporations or foundations. It could have abilities that the City government does not.
- 10. What should be done, if anything, to coordinate the efforts of the neighborhood associations?** Presently, they are not coordinated. United efforts could be more powerful and efficient.
- 11. Should there be additional cooperation and communication among the University and the neighborhoods?** The University has a major influence on its nearby neighborhoods.
- 12. Should City Code enforcement be more proactive and less complaint-driven?** Presently, most of the elements of the City Code having to do with site maintenance and nuisances are enforced only after a complaint has been received.
- 13. Should special on-street resident parking provisions be considered in neighborhoods?** Some Cities issue free stickers for cars owned by neighborhood residents that allow parking in high demand locations, such as near colleges, enabling police to enforce resident-only parking rules.

## Neighborhood Associations

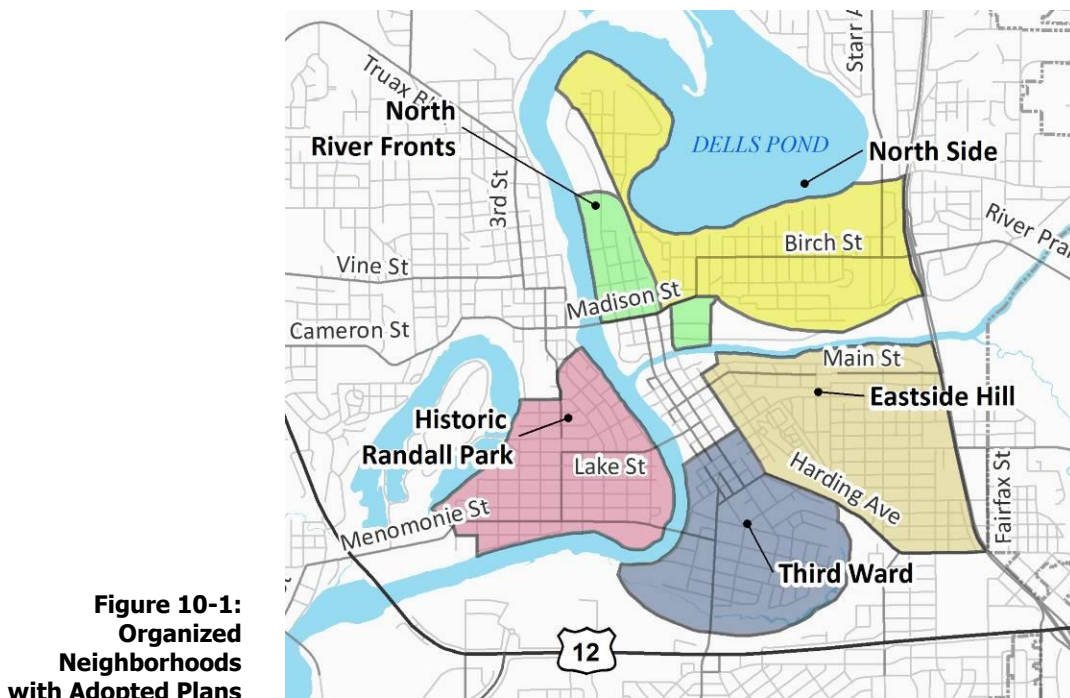
Neighborhoods are the basic building blocks of the community, and their health and vitality are essential to the future of Eau Claire. Citizens organize neighborhood associations in order to address common problems and look for ways to improve their neighborhood. What may seem impossible for one person to achieve alone becomes much easier to accomplish when citizens band together with common goals.

A neighborhood association is a voluntary organization of residents and other stakeholders who work together to improve and maintain the quality of life in their neighborhood. In the late 1970's, residents in five of Eau Claire's older neighborhoods created associations:

- Westside – now called Historic Randall Park
- Mt. Washington
- North River Fronts
- North Side Hill
- Third Ward

All of these associations, with the exception of Mt. Washington, were still active twenty years later. In 1996, Eau Claire began seeing a steady increase in the number of neighborhood associations. Residents on Runway Avenue formed an association in 1996. East Hill residents organized in 1997, followed by residents in the East Hamilton area in 1998. In 1999, residents in the Mt. Washington neighborhood re-established their association. Buffington area residents organized an association in early 2000.

The City's Planning Division provides a limited amount of staff time to work with neighborhoods to help organize new associations and to assist existing associations with projects and activities.



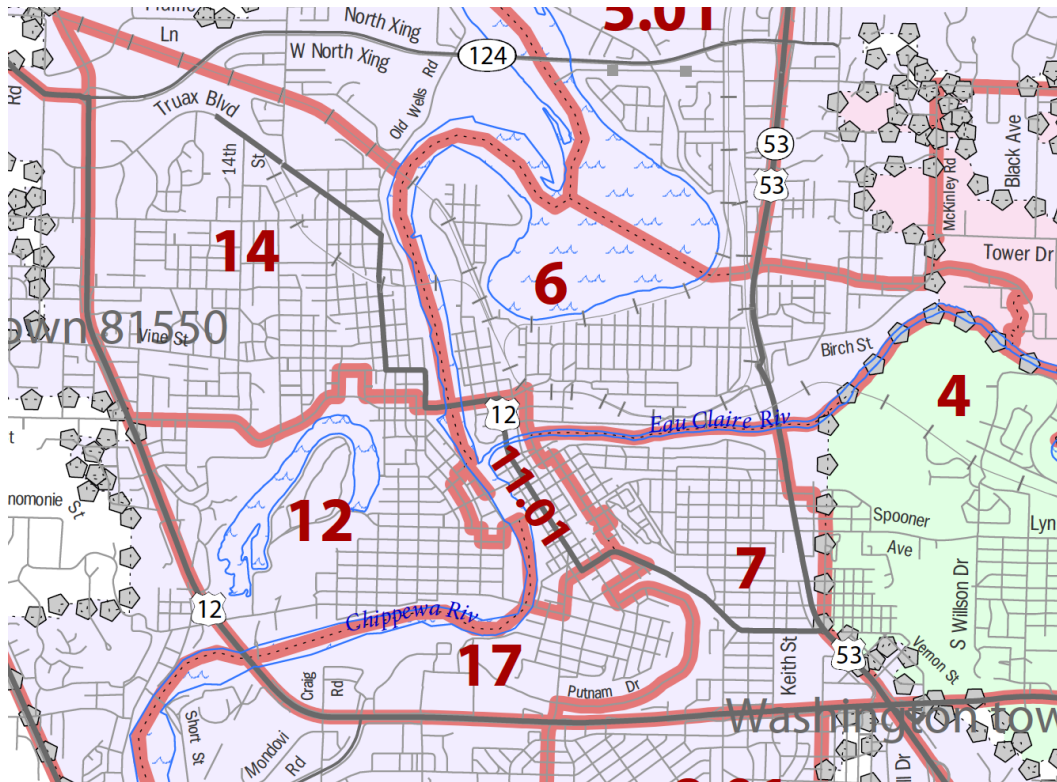
## Comparison of Selected Housing Characteristics

The central neighborhoods of Eau Claire, defined approximately as those within the ring of Hastings Way, Clairemont Avenue (US 12), Truax Boulevard and Dells Pond, comprise 48 percent of the City’s housing units and a high proportion of its jobs.

They include notable locations and organizations such as the downtown, the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Sacred Heart and Mayo Hospitals, City and County government offices, the Chippewa Valley Technical College and most of the community’s historically-significant buildings and districts.

Other features include Phoenix Park, the confluence of the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers, a lively new North Barstow District, the Water Street commercial district, Carson Park and Half Moon Lake, and the massive, reborn Banbury Place.

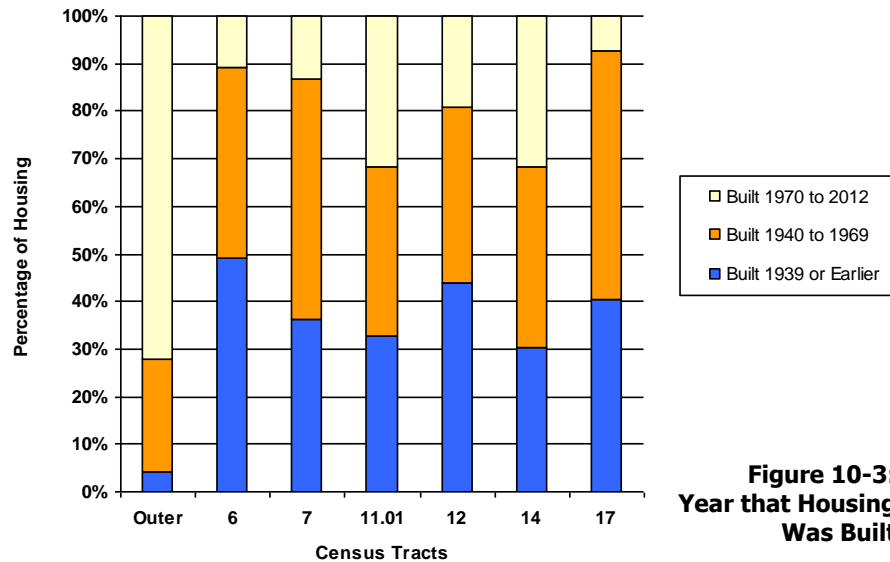
The six census tracts that encompass these neighborhoods include a housing stock that is different from the balance of the city. The central census tracts are compared with the “outer” tracts on a few key characteristics below. Figure 10-2 shows the location of the six central census tracts.



**Figure 10-2: Location of the Central Census Tracts in Eau Claire**

### Year that Housing Was Built

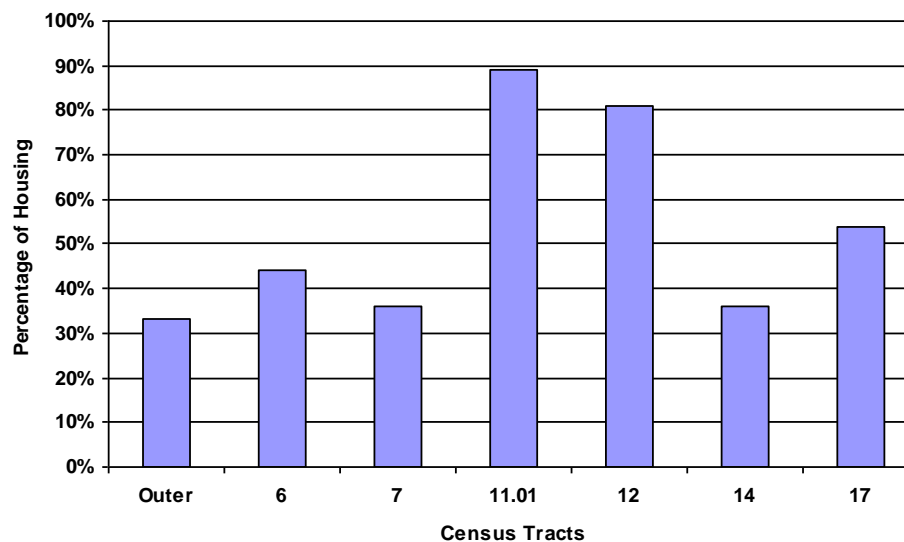
The housing in the central census tracts is more likely to have been built before 1940 (“pre-War”) than the housing in the other tracts. Note that Tract 11.01, the Downtown, has a higher percentage of newer housing than the other central tracts, largely because of the redevelopment of the North Barstow District.



**Figure 10-3:  
Year that Housing  
Was Built**

### Rental and Owner-Occupied Housing

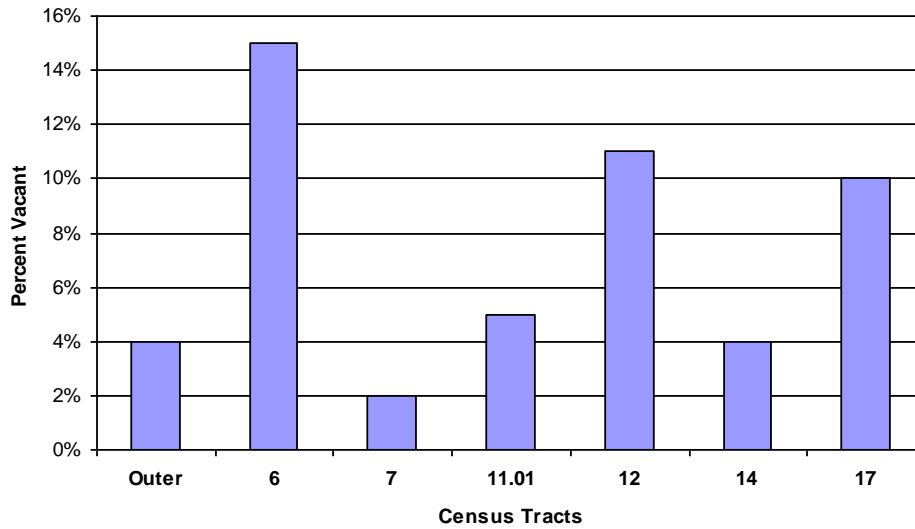
The percentage of rental housing in three of the six central tracts is only somewhat higher than the percentage in the outer tracts. The Downtown and Historic Randall Park Neighborhoods, Tracts 11.01 and 12, have the highest percentages of rental housing. The Randall Park percentage would be even higher were it not for the fact that Tract 12 includes the area west of Half Moon Lake.



**Figure 10-4: Percentage of Rental and Owner-Occupied Housing, 2012**

## Housing Vacancy

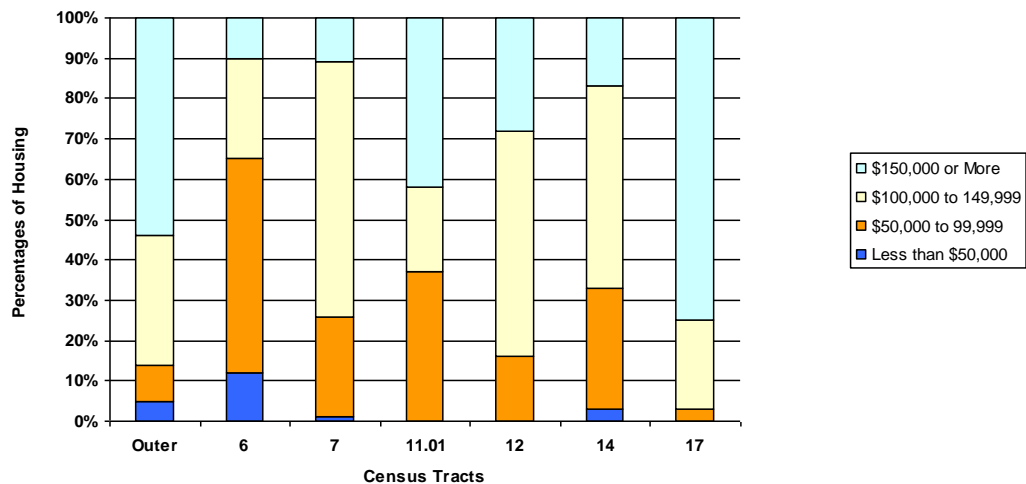
The housing vacancy percentage in 2012 was higher in three of the central tracts compared with the outer tracts but comparable in the others.



**Figure 10-5: Percentage Housing Vacancy, 2012**

## Value of Owner-Occupied Housing

Only Census Tract 17, which includes the Historic Third Ward neighborhood, had a higher percentage of housing valued at \$150,000 or more than the outer census tracts.



**Figure 10-6: Value of Owner-Occupied Housing, 2012**

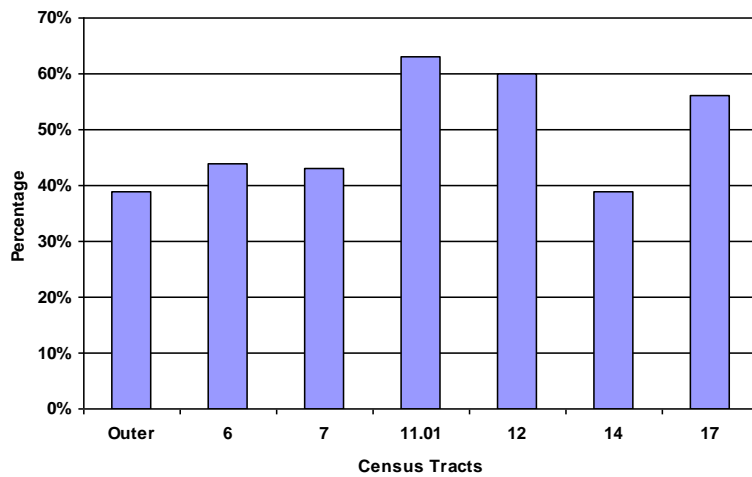


### Percentage of Renter-Households Paying More than 35 Percent of Their Income in Rent, 2010

Compared with the outer census tracts, five of the six central tracts had a higher percentage of residents paying more than 35 percent of their income in monthly rent.

The census tracts with the highest proportion of student residents also had the highest percentage of households paying more than 35 percent of their income in monthly rent.

Thirty-five percent of gross income is a threshold often used by the federal government as the maximum household ought to pay before housing is considered unaffordable.



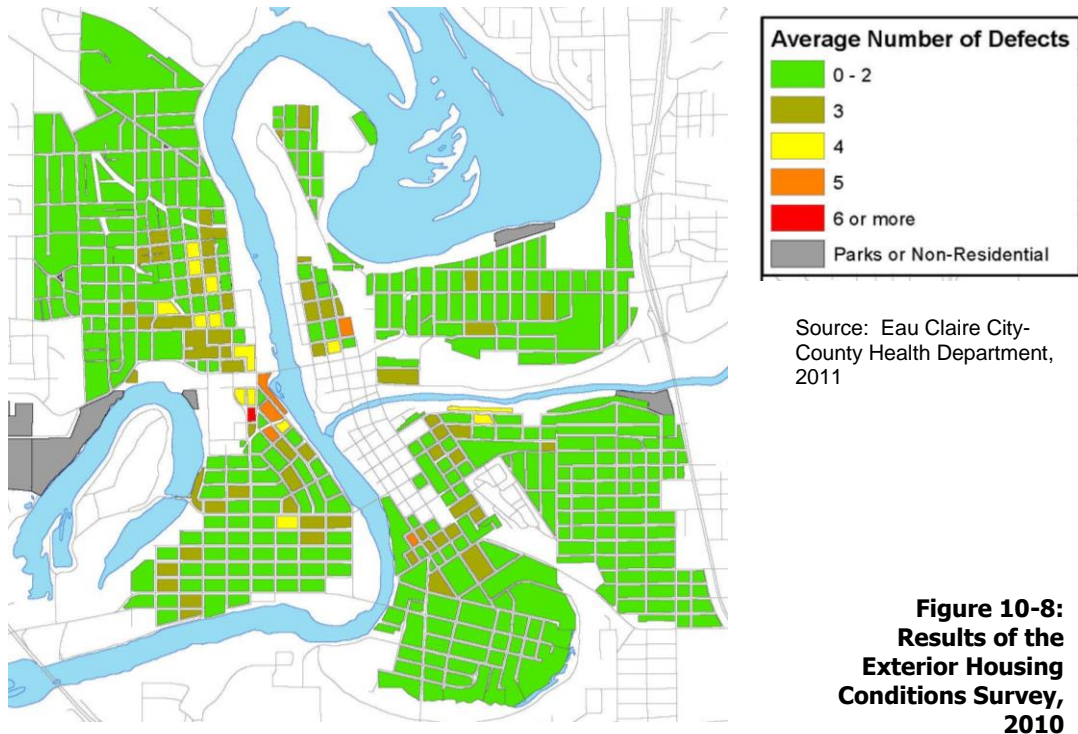
**Figure 10-7: Percentage of Renter-Households Paying More than 35 Percent of Their Income in Rent, 2010**

## Housing Conditions in the Central Neighborhoods

Through the Intensified Housing Code Compliance Program, the Eau Claire City-County Health Department inspected the exterior condition of houses in older neighborhoods of Eau Claire in 2010 to assess exterior conditions and to encourage neighborhood improvements to protect and promote public health.

The exterior condition of all properties was evaluated in selected neighborhoods, and properties with more significant exterior problems were scheduled for a later complete inspection. A written compliance notice was issued to those owners identifying any violations and the date by which corrections must be made. A short conference followed the inspection to explain the report, answer questions and inform owners how to mitigate the problems.

Figure 10-8 illustrates the results of the exterior survey averaged for each block. On any given block, there may be houses with more or fewer defects than the map shows.



### ***Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Plan Update, 2014***

This plan is an update of the 1995 neighborhood plan and policies for the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood, which at that time was referred to as the West Side Neighborhood. Figure 10-9 shows the boundary of the neighborhood and the pattern of land use in 2012. The complete plan document can be found on the City’s Website under “Planning Department.”

The original plan for the neighborhood was prepared in 1978, revised in 1982 and updated again in 1995.



**Figure 10-9: Neighborhood Boundaries and Land Use Pattern**

### **Background**

The Historic Randall Park Neighborhood is one of the oldest inner-city residential areas in Eau Claire, with many of the homes built when the City was first settled between 1870 and the early 1900s. Prior to the 1950s, the area was a stable neighborhood with predominately single-family homes conveniently located across the river from what is now the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire campus to the south and the Downtown to the east.

In the 1960s, the neighborhood began to experience a gradual transition, with the conversion of many single-family homes to rental units for University students. The conversion of homes to multiple rental units was stimulated in part by the R-3 and R-4 zoning that was adopted in 1952. The rapid increase in enrollment at the University during the 1960s led to an increase in demand for student housing in the area. As the student population grew,

families moved out, resulting in enrollment declines at Randall Elementary School.

Residents of the neighborhood started to notice a general decline in the appearance and upkeep of the area as homes were converted into rentals, resulting from deferred maintenance on many properties and insensitive remodeling of older homes. The neighborhood also experienced increased pressures due to the added population density that came with rental conversions. Problems included congested street parking, higher traffic volumes on some streets, vandalism, late night noise complaints, and increased trash and litter.

At the same time, the neighborhood experienced some new construction of apartments in response to the demand for additional student housing. The scale, design, and density characteristics of these buildings were not compatible with the older houses in the neighborhood.

Neighborhood residents felt that if this transition was left unchecked, further deterioration of the neighborhood and tax base would result. This in turn would result in a further exodus of families from the area. In response, residents organized to form a neighborhood association in 1978 and asked for assistance from the City in the preparation of a plan aimed at addressing problems related to zoning, conversion of homes to student rentals, housing conditions, density, inappropriate rehabilitation, and other related issues facing the neighborhood.

### **Overview of the Original and Updated Plans**

The overall objective of the 1978 plan was to stabilize and preserve the character of the neighborhood in order to encourage the remaining families to stay and even to encourage new families to move into the neighborhood. This was to be accomplished by:

- Stabilizing the density within the neighborhood through zoning changes
- Encouraging more sensitive rehabilitation and remodeling of the existing homes
- Improving building and property upkeep and maintenance through more active code enforcement.

Between 1978 and 1995, much was accomplished to improve the stability of the neighborhood and eliminate or reduce problems which were identified at that time. Some of the improvements which occurred during this period included:

**Zoning Regulations.** The City adopted conservancy zoning regulations and down-zoned the neighborhood to R-2 (1- and 2-Family Residential) and RM (Mixed Residential) zoning classifications. This helped address the issues of excessive densities on the smaller lots, conversion of homes to duplexes and rooming houses, and the removal of existing homes for the construction of apartments.

**Intensified Housing Program.** The City used its Community Development Block Grant dollars to help fund the Intensified Housing Enforcement Program and to provide below-market rate loans for housing rehabilitation.

**Architectural Building Survey.** A survey was completed by the City to identify properties of local and state architectural or historical significance. With assistance from the State Historical Society, a historic district was created with Randall Park as the focal point. Design guidelines for exterior renovations were incorporated as part of the district.

Since 1995, the following improvements have occurred:

**First Avenue** was rebuilt from Owen Park north to Grand Avenue.

**The Grand Theatre.** Conversion of the Salvation Army building at the northwest corner of West Grand and First Avenue into the “The Grand Theatre.”

**Courthouse / Government Center.** Expansion of the County Courthouse / Government Center to the east of the existing building, along with associated street changes on First Avenue and Second Avenue.

**Neighborhood Name Change.** Renaming the neighborhood and neighborhood association from the Westside Neighborhood to the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood.

**Floodplain Acquisition.** Acquisition of floodplain properties at the northwest corner of First Avenue and Chippewa Street to the west of Owen Park.

**Water Street Reconstruction.** Reconstruction of Water Street, including decorative lighting, pedestrian crossings, curb bump-outs and bicycle lanes.

**Water Street Marketing.** Water Street BID joining membership with the Downtown Eau Claire, Inc. organization to better market the businesses along Water Street.

**Collaboration with UWEC.** Collaboration with the University and Water Street businesses to address issues of “binge drinking” and problems associated with excessive alcohol consumption.

**Collaboration with Health Department.** Collaboration with the City / County Health Department in the reuse and disposal of materials resulting from the spring student move-out.

**Boulevard Trees.** Working with the City Forester in replanting boulevard trees on selected boulevards within the neighborhood.

**Mayo Hospital.** Construction of the Mayo Hospital bed tower and parking ramp.

**Water Street Plan.** Update of the Water Street Commercial District Plan in 2009 and the amendment to the neighborhood plan.

**Riverfront Trail .** The City initiated several riverfront beautification projects and trail extensions along the Chippewa River.

**Lakeshore Elementary School and Lakeshore Park.** Land was acquired for a new elementary school, replacing Randall School, and a park was built created along the eastern shore of Half Moon Lake.

## **Analysis Elements of the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Plan**

The plan described these features of the neighborhood:

- Pattern of existing land use
- Pattern of current zoning
- Locations of community facilities
- Relevant ideas from the Water Street Commercial District Plan
- Location of the river and lake floodplains
- Housing characteristics including age and physical condition
- Number of housing units per structure and tenure (owned versus rented)
- Population characteristics
- Historic and architectural resources
- Police calls
- Roads, parking, bicycling and walking

## **Housing Conditions**

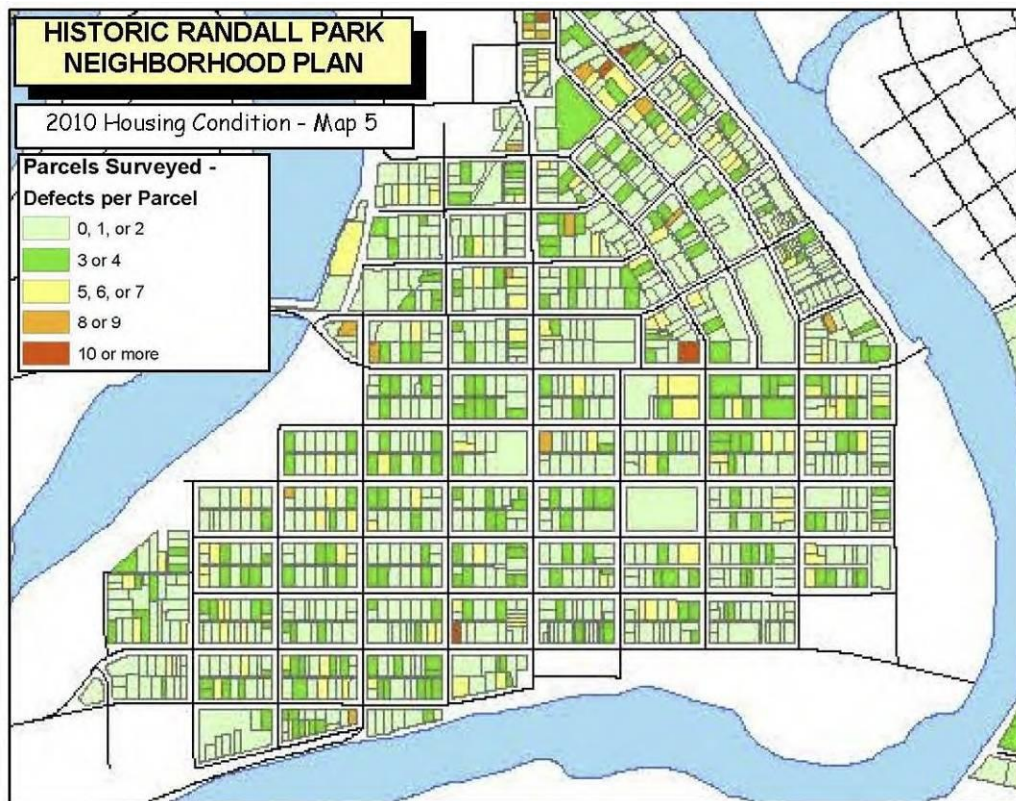
The structural condition and physical appearance of the housing stock in this neighborhood is widely varied. Many of the late 19th century homes have been carefully maintained, which enhances the quality and image of the neighborhood. Other housing units are in need of varying degrees of rehabilitation, ranging from minor repairs to extensive rehabilitation involving major building components.

Figure 10-10 provides a summary of housing condition by parcel in the neighborhood, obtained from a 2010 survey taken by the City / County Health Department. Those housing units rated in a less than fair condition generally are the renter-occupied housing units. Survey data indicate that the exterior housing conditions have improved within the neighborhood since the early 1980s. A major reason for this improvement has been the adoption of the Intensified Housing Enforcement program administered by the Health Department and the availability of low-interest rehabilitation loans from the City.

Another issue related to the condition and appearance of the housing stock raised in the original neighborhood plan pertains to rehabilitation work which has not been sensitive or consistent with the architectural characteristics of the 19th century housing units. Examples include: removal of porches and windows, downsizing windows, removal of cornices and other decorative elements, and the use of building materials for railings, columns and platforms which are not consistent with the materials used for the house.

Over time, this type of remodeling activity has had a negative effect on the neighborhood. It has resulted in a general decline in the character and image of portions of the neighborhood which has in turn accelerated the exodus of families from the neighborhood and made it more difficult to attract new families to the Randall Park neighborhood.





**Figure 10-10: Summary of Housing Conditions in the Randall Park Neighborhood**

### **Adopted Neighborhood Strategies and Recommendations**

Several of the strategies for the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood have been carried over from the previous plan, as some are ongoing, while others are still relevant, but not completed.

#### **Guiding Principle**

Provide a neighborhood that is stable, sustainable, and attractive, that is an affordable place to live and has a variety of housing choices that encourage a mix of owner- and renter-occupied homes.

- Reverse the decline in the number of **owner-occupied homes**.
- Use appropriate building design and site plan guidelines for **new residential construction**.
- Encourage the use of rehabilitation guidelines for **remodeling** work.
- Create a task force to study the continuing trend of the **conversion of owner-occupied homes to rentals**.
- Encourage the **revitalization of the riverfront area** along the First Avenue Pedestrian Mall.
- Continue to use Fulton Street as the **southern boundary for the Mayo Hospital campus**.

- Review the boundaries for the **Eau Claire County Courthouse and Government Center**.
- Study zoning and redevelopment options for the commercial / industrial buildings east of **Lakeshore Park**.
- **Rezone** the half block south of the Lakeshore School site on Hudson Street.
- Encourage the **redevelopment** of the areas north of Hobb's Ice Arena.
- Maintain the existing boundaries of the **RM and R-2 zoning** districts.
- Consider an amendment to the *Water Street Commercial District Plan* relating to the **dwelling unit density** in certain areas south of Water Street.
- Encourage **redevelopment along Water Street** to the west of Sixth Avenue.
- Encourage the redevelopment of areas within the **floodplain**.
- Evaluate the current status of the Randall Park Historic **Landmark District**.
- Ensure timely delivery of **City services** consistent with other neighborhoods within the City.
- Evaluate the need for additional **street lighting** within the neighborhood.
- Continue to work to provide programs and services that will reduce or eliminate violations relating to **property upkeep** and zoning violations.
- Continue to work to provide programs and services that will address **nuisance behaviors**.
- Continue to support the **Intensified Housing Enforcement Program**.
- Develop a plan for the **FEMA-acquired open space** located to the west of Owen Park.
- Work with the City Forester to continue to implement a **tree replacement** program.
- Continue to implement an aggressive **street and sidewalk** improvement program within the neighborhood.
- Continue to improve the condition of **alleys** in the neighborhood.
- Conduct a study of **street parking** use in the vicinity of Mayo Hospital and the County Courthouse to develop recommendations that would improve pedestrian, bicycle, and motorist safety and which would provide on-street parking availability to area residents.
- Continue to acquire additional land on the south side of the 400 block of Chippewa Street for **parking**.
- Replace the **Water Street Bridge** and **Half Moon Lake Causeway**, to include improved pedestrian and bicycle accommodations.



## ***Campus Master Plan for the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2011***

The *UW-EC Campus Master Plan*, 2011, is a guide to capital improvements over the next 20 years. The six themes for recommendations in the plan are:

1. Enhance the learning and living environment
2. Bring students back to campus
3. Focus on the pedestrian
4. Establish the UWEC identity
5. Increase the beauty of campus
6. Collaborate with the Eau Claire Region.

### **1: Enhance the Learning and Living Environment**

#### **New Student Center**

The new student center will replace the obsolete Davies Center (completed).

#### **Education Building**

The education departments of the College of Education and Human Sciences will consolidate into one building that simultaneously fronts on the Lower Campus mall and Schofield Hall and forms the Park Avenue frontage (completed).

#### **Science Buildings (Phase 1 and Phase 2)**

The sciences will move to a riverfront complex that is built in phases as space is needed and resources are available.

#### **Putnam Outdoor Classroom**

Ecological learning will extend into the river corridor as the Putnam parking lot is transformed into an outdoor classroom and a passage to the Chippewa River.

#### **Hilltop Dining and Crest Recreation Centers Renovations**

With more students living on the Upper Campus, the cramped and outdated Hilltop and Crest Centers will be renovated to improve dining and recreation services.

#### **University Outreach Center**

The Continuing Education and other community-focused offices will be located in the renovated Eau Claire State Office Building on West Clairemont Avenue.

## **2: Bring Students Back to Campus**

Because demand for campus housing exceeds the limited supply, students have been living off-campus in hotels that have been leased as campus housing for decades. The master plan brings these students back to campus into modern and renovated residential halls.

### **Residential Halls West of Towers Hall**

Two new suite-style halls will flank an upper campus precinct pedestrian mall.

### **New Residence Hall on Horan Site**

The Upper Campus density will be increased as Horan Hall may be replaced with a larger suite-style residence hall.

### **Off-Campus Residential Project**

The University seeks to partner with the private and/or non-profit sector to provide housing for upperclassmen at an off-campus site in close proximity to campus. [This may be accomplished Downtown at the Haymarket site.]

### **Hall Renovations**

Over the next twenty years, Towers North, Towers South, Governors, Murray, Oak Ridge, Sutherland and Bridgman Halls will be upgraded and modernized.

### **Quadrangle South of Governors Hall and Upper Campus Precinct Recreation**

Parking will be moved to the campus edges so a quadrangle south of Governors Hall can be restored as a passive recreational space for Upper Campus residents. Recreation spaces such as tennis courts, basketball courts and sand volleyball will be relocated and consolidated.

## **3: Focus on the Pedestrian**

### **Accommodate the Automobile**

The compact campus will become more welcoming to those walking, cycling and busing while still accommodating those that need to drive automobiles. Walking will remain the primary circulation mode on campus, and an interconnected network of sidewalks, bridges and staircases will connect all parts of campus.

### **Garfield Pedestrian Mall and Transit Loop**

Garfield Avenue will be reconstructed into a pedestrian-focused circulation boulevard that links the Lower and Upper campuses.

### **Expanded Bluff Staircase**

An expanded bluff staircase near Hilltop Dining Center will dramatically and directly connect the Lower and Upper Campuses.

### **Bicycle Circulation and Storage**

To encourage cycling, the University will establish a connected bicycle path network and require bicycle racks and covered storage throughout campus.

### **Relocated and Structured Parking**

Automobile parking will be moved to the edges of each campus but the number of spaces will be maintained. New parking will be provided on surface lots east of Towers Hall, on the Zorn Arena / Brewer site, on the Phillips Science Hall site, and north of the Eau Claire State Office Building. In addition, a parking structure on the Water Street lot will serve increased activity on the Water Street and Lower Campus precincts.

## **4: Establish the UW-Eau Claire Identity**

Just as UW-Eau Claire reaches out into the community, the identity of campus will be strengthened on its edges.

### **Visitor Center and Lower Campus Precinct Gateways**

The Visitor Center will be relocated to the corner of State and Garfield – the University’s “front door.” A pedestrian entry portal at the end of Roosevelt Avenue will welcome the community into the campus’s newest and largest quad. Gateway plazas and signage at the State / Garfield intersection and Park Avenue at Hibbard Hall will further define the campus identity within the Historic Third Ward Neighborhood.

### **Upper Campus Precinct Gateways**

The University’s edges with the West Clairemont Education / Medical District will be defined with signs and plazas at the West Clairemont Avenue intersections with University Avenue and Stein Boulevard as well as near Chancellor’s Hall.

### **Water Street Campus Precinct Gateways**

Gateways on Water Street at 1st Avenue and 3rd Avenue will solidify the University’s commitment to Water Street and the Randall Park Neighborhood.

## **5: Increase the Beauty of Campus**

The University will extend the natural open space and beauty of the historic Lower Campus to the rest of campus.

### **Lower Campus Precinct Mall and Plaza**

The space between Schofield Hall and the Education Building will remain as a formal quadrangle, anchored by a new plaza where students can gather.

### **Quadrangle South of Schofield Hall**

The demolition of Davies Center will transform the Lower Campus, creating the largest open space on campus, framed by buildings both historic and new. The Little Niagara Creek will be a featured element.

### **Water Street Quadrangle**

The Water Street campus should be centered on a quadrangle upon the renovation of the Haas Fine Arts Center.

### **Linking Boulevard on the Upper Campus Precinct**

The active place on the Upper Campus will be a pedestrian mall between two new

residence halls. The linking boulevard will also serve as the gateway into the Upper Campus from University Avenue.

## **6: Collaborate with the Eau Claire Region**

The University already partners with the City for facilities at Bollinger Fields, Hobbs Ice Center and Carson Park. The University proposes to extend that collaboration.

Both the University and the community share a need for a performing arts center and a fine arts center. The facilities, which could be combined or stand-alone, would replace the Kjer Theatre and expand the community's arts venues. The University welcomes joint facilities in a location that supports both University and community needs, whether on campus or in close proximity to it. The campus master plan graphic shows one potential location for the fine and performing arts facilities on the Water Street parking lot near Haas Fine Arts Center.

The University also welcomes the opportunity to partner with the community on a multi-purpose event center that would not only replace the Zorn Arena but also host events and meetings for the entire Chippewa Valley. The facility will be located off-campus in a location convenient to both the University and the Eau Claire community.

## Planned Phasing of Major Campus Improvements

**Phase One – 2011 through 2016:** The Lower Campus precinct will be redefined with the student center, education building and outdoor classroom. The Visitor Center will welcome the community onto campus. The University and the City will have collaborated on a fine and performing arts center. Two new residence halls will be built on the Upper Campus, an off-campus residential hall and possibly a reconstructed Horan Hall. The transformation of existing residence halls will continue with renovation of Towers Hall. Crest Center will be renovated into a recreational complex.



**Phase Two – 2017 through 2022:** Haas Fine Arts and Governors Hall will be renovated, and Hilltop Center will be repurposed and renovated as the Upper Campus dining facility.



**Phase Three – 2023 through 2028:** The sciences will be transformed with the construction of two phases of Science Hall and the demolition of Phillips Science Hall. The University and community will have collaborated on an off-campus multi-purpose event center, and Zorn Arena will have been demolished. The renovation of residence halls will continue with Murray and Oak Ridge Halls.



**Figure 10-11: Phases One, Two and Three of the UWEC Campus Plan**



### ***West Riverside District Plan, 2010***

With the aim of creating linear parks and trails, this plan specifically identified three-quarters of a mile of land acquisition and redevelopment along the banks of the Chippewa River from the former Milwaukee Road railroad bridge near Anderson Street down to the Chippewa River State Trail Bridge.

Strategies for stabilizing and improving housing quality in the neighborhood were recommended, including increased code enforcement, downward adjustments to the density allowed by zoning, housing rehabilitation assistance, creating a neighborhood advocacy organization and linking the riverfront park into the neighborhood.

Development and streetscape enhancements along Madison, Cameron and Oxford Streets were recommended to help create an urban sense of place and make better use of land.

**Madison- Cameron Streets Corridor:** Land development along Madison Street should continue to evolve to a mixture of small retail and service businesses, offices, and potentially, housing above commercial space. Buildings in this corridor may be up to four stories in height. The Bellinger-Mappa block may undergo redevelopment. Additional off-street parking may be created west of Babcock Street for the Phillips Senior Center, the Montessori School and the historic Ager House. The single-family housing along Whipple Street may eventually be redeveloped to housing above shops or multi-family housing. The Ager House and adjacent public open space will be preserved. Public art or monuments should be located along Madison Street to provide a sense of arrival and focus.

**Mayo Hospital and Vicinity:** If additional facilities are added to the Luther-Mayo Hospital complex, they are expected to be within the boundaries of its present property. Fulton Street will remain the southern edge of the medical campus.

**Southeast Neighborhood:** New multiple-family housing will be encouraged between the West Riverside Office Building and the multi-use trail. Property facing Bellinger Street, including the triangular block south of Randall Street, may be redeveloped to small offices, ideally medically-related. The industrial buildings near the multi-use path should be redeveloped to housing.

**Near North Neighborhood:** The residential neighborhood between Platt and Cameron Streets should retain its present scale and character. See page 61 of the plan document.



**Figure 10-12: Potential Buildings and Parks in the West Riverside Neighborhood**

**Northern Neighborhood:** North of Platt Street, only a few isolated changes are proposed in the pattern of land use and development. There are three parcels of wooded land on steep slopes, along with two aging industrial sites, that could be used for housing.

**Oxford Avenue Corridor:** Property along the Oxford Avenue corridor should be redeveloped to take advantage of its views to the proposed riverfront park and the river itself. Land uses may include small shops and service businesses, offices, and multiple-family housing. Some housing may be located over commercial spaces. Surface parking should be minimized in favor of locations underneath buildings.



**Bicycling and Walking Paths:** There are three former railroad corridors crossing the District, one of which has already been converted to a bicycling and walking path. The other two should also be converted to recreational trails. A path for walking and bicycling should be extended around the northern and western sides of Half Moon Lake

**Neighborhood Links to the Riverfront:** Fountain, Vine and Fulton Streets should be improved as east-west connections from the residential neighborhood to the river. Along all three streets, sidewalks should be rebuilt as needed, pedestrian street crossings striped, gaps filled in the pattern of street trees, and decorative lighting installed.

**Riverfront:** There should be a continuous band of park space along the riverfront wide enough, at a minimum, for a paved pedestrian and bicyclist path along the top of the river bluff. This riverfront park may be substantially wider north of Platt or Maple Streets.

**Riverfront Park and Trail Design:** The desired boundaries of the planned riverfront park are expected to be set during a subsequent planning process. This parkland may be purchased by the City using a variety of funding sources. When planning the park and trail, considerations include: providing a comfortable relationship with the housing planned adjacent to the trail; anticipating a variety of active and passive recreational activities; returning some areas to natural conditions; and providing links to the neighborhood and city-wide trail system. High quality materials should be used.



Image of the proposed riverfront trail with adjacent housing, looking north into the park.



**Kessler Park:** North of Maple Street, the riverfront park could broaden substantially, extending all the way west to First Street. In exchange, Kessler Park could be sold for housing development and its functions moved east of First Street. Kessler Park will be retained until replacement land is acquired and improved.

**Housing Rehabilitation:** Private housing rehabilitation will be encouraged and assisted by the existing rehabilitation programs administered by the Eau Claire Housing Division and by the Housing Code Compliance Program of the Eau Claire City-County Health Department.

**Code Compliance:** The City will continue to support those owners who wish to maintain an attractive neighborhood through continued and intensive enforcement of City regulations on building and yard maintenance, parking, trash and other nuisances.



New development along Oxford Avenue may range from two to four stories and include townhouses, apartments, retail or office buildings, or some combination of commercial and residential space.



Narrow-lot single-family housing would be appropriate for infill and redevelopment sites in many parts of the West Riverside District. These examples of new housing use traditional American architectural proportions and features (such as the front porch), which would blend nicely with many of the older houses in the District.

### ***Clairemont Avenue Educational and Medical District Plan, 2009***

The Clairemont Education and Medical District includes the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, the Chippewa Valley Technical College, Sacred Heart Hospital and several medical clinics. On a typical day, there are more employees, students and visitors in this district than in any other part of Eau Claire.

Funded by major institutions and the City, this plan called for improved connections to the Chippewa River frontage as part of its theme of creating “a district focused on mind and body wellness.”

The plan guided growth to the university, technical college, hospital and clinics; called for improvements to streets, parking, landscaping, sidewalks, lighting, identity and wayfinding signs; and recommended expanded parks and trails as a means of linking the educational and medical campuses to the riverfront open space. The drawing below hints at those improvements.



**Figure 10-13: Open Space and Streetscape Framework for the Clairemont Avenue Educational and Medical District**

## Objectives of the Educational and Medical District Plan

**Identity:** Improve the awareness of District users and the general public that this is a distinct part of Eau Claire focused on mind and body wellness.

**Image:** Enhance the appearance of the District in ways that support its identity.

**Access and Circulation:** Improve overall access, ease of use, and traffic circulation coming to and from the District.

**Parking:** Reduce the impact of surface parking by softening its appearance and/or reducing available surface spaces.

**Pedestrian and Bicyclist Circulation:** Promote walking and bicycling as attractive options for commuting and wellness.

**Land Development:** Create locations for new and expanded buildings in the District.

**Parks and Open Space:** Make public park space a more visible and accessible element of the District.

## Road System

**New Road in the Clinics Area:** Build a new east-west public road linking the Hendrickson Drive roundabout, Heights Drive, Craig Road and the western Clairemont Avenue frontage road next to the Pizza Hut restaurant.

**Lasker Drive:** Vacate Lasker Drive after the proposed new east-west street is built.

**Hospital Access:** Redesign the access and internal circulation between Hendrickson Drive and the front entrance to Sacred Heart Hospital.

**Stein Boulevard:** Improve Stein Boulevard north of Clairemont Avenue, connect it to the east at two points and deed it to the City as a public street. Link Stein Boulevard to University Drive via a roundabout near the University's power plant. Extend a private road north from the roundabout to link University Drive West to Stein Boulevard. Create a new public road between Stein and College Drive north of the State office building.

**College Drive:** Connect College Drive to University Drive East and connect the Technical College parking lot to College Drive at two points.

**Northern Frontage Roads:** Once the projects described above are accomplished, two changes would be possible to the northern frontage road system east of Hendrickson Drive.

1. Detach (pull north) the frontage road intersections at Stein Boulevard.
2. Vacate the frontage road between the Technical College and Stein Boulevard. Access to the parking in front of the State office building would be via a driveway from Stein Boulevard.
3. Narrow the frontage road south of the hospital.

The changes described above would provide a benefit by reducing the problems created by the frontage roads meeting the north-south streets too close to Clairemont Avenue. Traffic would be shifted away from the frontage roads to other east-west streets, and one frontage road intersection at Stein Boulevard would be moved to the north.

**Southern Frontage Road:** Over the long term, realign and detach the southern frontage road on the west side of Stein Boulevard. Redevelop land to accommodate this vital improvement.

**University Campus:** Remove the north-south road east of the power plant. Shift the access for the plant's existing parking west to the proposed new road.

**Technical College Southern Parking:** Relocate the entrance of the parking lot located south of Clairemont Avenue to the proposed roundabout.

### **Transit**

Enhance bus access to and through the District by improving connections among the streets, specifically:

- Stein Boulevard N. as a public street
- Stein Boulevard linked to University Drive West and East
- A new Lasker Drive linked to Craig Road and Clairemont Avenue.

A basic design objective is to create more of a district of urban-sized blocks, which would facilitate walking and vehicular circulation.

### **Building Infill Development and Redevelopment**

**Clinics Area:** Marshfield Clinic may expand its present building and add a parking structure.

Parking and road changes in the clinics sub-district may allow the construction of another building near the intersection of Lasker and Heights Drives. The vacated Lasker Drive right-of-way could also be used for a new building and parking.

**Hospital:** Sacred Heart Hospital may add one or more clinic buildings west of its main complex. Access would be via the roundabout and frontage road.

### **Streetscape and Open Space Framework**

A network of street-edge improvements along the major streets of the District is proposed, plus two new parks that supplement the current open spaces.

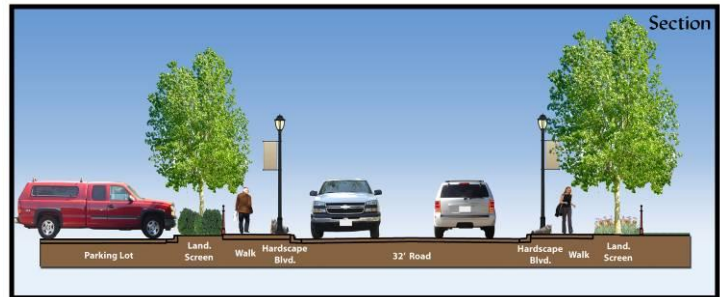
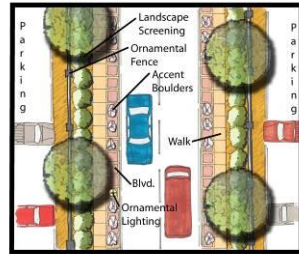
**Emphasis Areas:** The streetscape and entrance enhancements are organized as follows, each with a slightly different application of an overall theme.

- The regional access roads
- The medical sub-district
- The educational sub-district
- The sub-district entrances.

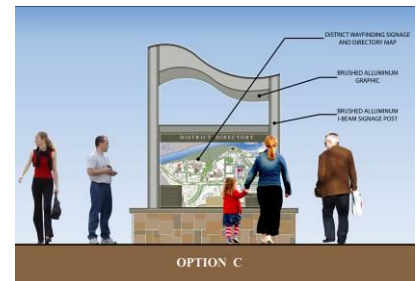


**Streets Enhanced:** The streets proposed for improvement in this system are:

1. North Hendrickson Drive and the roundabout
2. Stein Boulevard North, University Drive West and East, the new Lasker Drive, and Craig Road
3. Heights and Oakridge Drives, College Drive, the north frontage road of Clairemont Avenue.
4. Clairemont Avenue and Hendrickson Drive So.



Suggested street landscaping for Lasker, Craig and Oakridge Drives.



**Thematic Elements:** Unifying elements of the streetscape and open space network are:

- A District logotype and colors
- The dominant overstory tree species
- An ornamental pedestrian-scale light fixture
- A wayfinding sign system
- Banners (which include the district or university logo and are changed seasonally)
- Placement of large boulders, found in the Chippewa River valley region, along the road edges.

**Signs:** A comprehensive system of wayfinding and directional signs is proposed. Elements of the sign system should include highway directional signs, major monument or entrance signs and internal wayfinding signs.

**Parks:** A proposed new park would be River Bluff Park, located along University Drive West.

## **Sidewalks and Bicycle Paths**

**Sidewalk Network:** Build the network of sidewalks and bicycling paths illustrated by the District Master Plan and the streetscape guidelines

**Stein Boulevard:** Greatly improve Stein Boulevard north of Clairemont Avenue for pedestrian movement between the University or Technical College and the shopping center. Ensure that WisDOT properly maintains the pedestrian striping across Clairemont Avenue. Request that WisDOT adds count-down timers.

**Clairemont Avenue:** Install a sidewalk along the south side of the southern frontage road from Stein Boulevard to Starbuck's Coffee.

**Links to River Bluff Park:** Connect the planned River Bluff Park to the hospital via two striped pedestrian crossings of University Drive and to the western clinics via a sidewalk along the relocated Lasker Drive. Install a sidewalk along the west side of University and Hendrickson Drives. Wind a walking path down the slope to the riverfront hiking trail, which links to the bicycling and walking bridge over the Chippewa River as well as to the Chippewa River State Trail.

## **Parks and Open Space**

**River Bluff Park:** Improve the City parkland and integrate it with Putnam Prairie Park on the property at the top of the bluff controlled by the Putnam Park Commission. Coordinate and unify the design of these two adjacent park sites.

## **Plan Implementation**

**Zoning Ordinance Amendments.** Rezone the Sacred Heart Hospital site to C-3, Community Commercial District.

Amend the Zoning Map to delete the Highway Overlay Zoning District from the study area in order to remove the additional setbacks required by that zoning district.

### ***Water Street Commercial District Plan Update, 2009***

The Water Street Commercial District Plan was originally prepared in 1982 through the collaboration of City staff, property owners, business owners, and neighborhood residents in response to a number of issues affecting the area.

From 1982 through 2009, the Water Street Commercial District made significant strides in many areas and exhibits a character and charm that is unique to Eau Claire and western Wisconsin. With its close proximity to the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, its mix of businesses, historic character and buildings, and location along the riverfront and recreational trail, the area is not only a destination for the neighborhood and University but for the City and beyond.



**Figure 10-14: Study Area for the Water Street Commercial District Plan**

### **Water Street Assets**

- Variety of shops and restaurants
- Variety of small and unique businesses
- Central and convenient location
- Unique character
- Historic character
- Pedestrian friendly
- Bus service
- Nightlife
- Riverfront trail

### **Water Street Problems and Issues at the Time of the Plan**

#### **Land Use and Urban Design**

- Policies at the time of the plan did not encourage combining residential with commercial redevelopment west of 6th Avenue
- Need to evaluate current prohibition of drive-ups for business services
- Poor upkeep of some buildings
- No grocery store
- Concerns related to taverns within the area and associated problems
- Lack of building design guidelines.

### **Parking and Transportation**

- Insufficient parking, poor snow removal along Riverside Avenue and along the curb in the 200-500 blocks
- Inadequate street lighting, and poor alley condition.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Environment**

- Concerns relating to pedestrian safety, and need for bicycle amenities.

### **Open Space, Parks and Riverfront**

- Poor visibility of river from trail and Menomonie Street
- Limited physical access to shoreline
- Underutilization of riverfront
- Gap in riverfront trail system.

### **Business Environment**

- Need for improved marketing of area and coordination with DECI
- Encouraging participation of businesses with BID
- Negative image of the area in the evenings
- Poor wayfinding signage
- Need to update BID boundaries.

## **Major Recommendations of the Water Street Commercial District Plan**

### **Land Use and Urban Design**

1. Retain the special zoning provisions for the 400 block of Water Street, which are aimed at maintaining the highly pedestrian orientation of this block.
2. Continue to encourage new buildings to be constructed at the front property line and to be at least two stories in height with an upper floor residential component.
3. Encourage higher density development along Water Street to the west of Sixth Avenue, similar in scale to the existing commercial areas, to include first floor commercial and upper floor residential apartments.
4. No new taverns should be permitted in the 200 through 400 blocks of Water Street. New taverns proposed to the west of Fifth Avenue would require a conditional use permit.
5. Consider redeveloping existing residential areas along the river to provide new housing opportunities of a density higher than allowed under the current Mixed Residential zoning. Such new development would need to be of a large scale and meet a series of design guidelines.
6. Develop design guidelines to assist building owners in making appropriate building façade improvements and encourage appropriate design of new buildings.



7. Designate the existing National Register Historic District within the 400 block of Water Street as a local historic district.

### **Parking and Transportation**

1. Provide additional off-street parking.
2. Study the feasibility of designating Riverside Avenue as a one-way street to reduce traffic conflicts and congestion.

### **Open Space, Parks, and Riverfront**

1. Develop an access point to the Chippewa River at the extension of Fifth Avenue to provide a location for people using the river for tubing, rafting, and fishing to access the shoreline.
2. Study alternatives to complete the gap in the riverfront trail within the 600 block of Menomonie Street.
3. Develop a plan for the utilization of the City-owned land located northwest of Chippewa Street and First Avenue.

### **Business Environment**

1. Support efforts of community arts and theatre organizations to develop a community performing arts center, possibly in the vicinity of the Haas Fine Arts Center.
2. Actively market the area for a new grocery store.
3. Consider additional streetscape improvements to further enhance the appearance of the area and instill a sense of arrival to Water Street.
4. The BID should continue to work with the Bridge Coalition to sponsor education and prevention programs to address concerns related to excessive alcohol consumption.
5. Target commercial and residential areas for intensified code enforcement to address problems such as poor property upkeep, illegal signage, and the accumulation of garbage.

### ***North Riverfronts Neighborhood Plan, 2003***

This plan updated previous plans from 1981 and 1987.

The North Riverfronts Neighborhood is composed of modest single-family and duplex homes on small lots with pockets of business or industry.

The neighborhood is located between the Chippewa River and the Union Pacific Railroad track plus a smaller area south of Galloway Street.

Begun in the late 1800s, the neighborhood provided housing for employees of companies such as the paper mill, Phoenix Manufacturing, Walter Brewery and the Uniroyal Tire Company (formerly the Gillette Tire Company). Closing and relocating these major enterprises contributed to decreased homeownership, declining housing conditions, a more transient population, a perception of the neighborhood being unsafe, and resident apathy.

From 1970 to 2000, the neighborhood's population decreased from 1,191 to 889, a 25 percent decrease. Likewise, the homeownership rate also went steadily down from 35 percent in 1970 to 18 percent in 2000. With the neighborhood's high mobility rate, establishing community ties and strengthening neighborhood bonds becomes difficult and adds to the identity crisis that many residents feel prevents families from moving to the neighborhood.

However, the North Riverfronts Neighborhood has many positive qualities upon which it can build, and it offers much for families and individuals who value convenience. These include:

- Proximity to a revitalizing downtown
- Frontage on the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers
- Easy access to riverfront parks and trails
- Convenient bus service.

At the same time, poor property maintenance (including the former Walter Brewery site), overly generous or conflicting zoning, partial location in a 100-year floodplain, and poor property management by some landlords combine to keep the neighborhood from reaching its potential.

Residents felt that the presence of a neighborhood playground, a new riverfront park, a Community Oriented Policing Office (no longer in operation) and an active neighborhood association all increase the neighborhood's value and enjoyment. Strategies that would help make the neighborhood more attractive include:

- Rezoning of the area for more appropriate uses.
- Redeveloping the brewery site and other portions of the neighborhood
- Increasing homeownership opportunities
- Supporting downtown revitalization
- Maintaining the architectural integrity of buildings
- Maintaining strong participation in the neighborhood association.

### ***East Side Hill Neighborhood Plan, 2006***

These strategies may be used to realize the neighborhood's vision:

- 1. Rezonings:** Reduce allowable density and eliminate conflicting use patterns.
- 2. Businesses:** Do not allow commercial areas to encroach into residential areas.
- 3. Riverfront Zoning:** Rezone all City-owned property located along the Eau Claire River to "P" Public.
- 4. Riverfront Greenway:** Study the feasibility of the long-term acquisition of dwellings along the north side of East Grand Avenue that abut the Eau Claire River west of Boyd Park for the purpose of creating a riverfront park.
- 5. Code Enforcement:** Be more prompt, sustained and consistent with code enforcement. Continue to implement the Intensified Housing Code Enforcement Program. Target intensified housing code efforts and programs towards blocks having the most blighted conditions.
- 6. Streets:** Continue the street reconstruction program, with special attention given to those streets that have been evaluated as being in very poor condition.
- 7. Parks:** Improve the Boyd Park, Archery and University Parks.
- 9. Greenway:** Extend the greenway from the S. Bridge to Boyd Park.
- 10. Trees:** Encourage property owners to plant trees in the boulevards.
- 11. Entrances:** Improve the neighborhood entrances.
- 12. Historic Properties:** Add eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places.
- 13. Promotion:** Promote the neighborhood to young families and first-time buyers.
- 14. Organization:** Maintain the neighborhood association.

### ***Third Ward Neighborhood Plan, 2001***

The Third Ward Neighborhood is bounded by the Chippewa River, Putnam Creek and Park, Harding Street and Emery Street. The plan for the neighborhood was adopted as part of the *Comprehensive Plan* in 2001 after being prepared with considerable help from residents.

The neighborhood had been experiencing a decline in the percentage of houses that are owner-occupied and some decline in housing conditions.

Some of the key recommendations of the plan were:

1. Reduce the allowable **housing density** by adjusting the zoning downward.
2. Discourage or disallow the **expansion of the University** campus into the neighborhood so as to prevent further housing change.
3. Continue the Intensified Housing **Code Enforcement** Program.
4. Encourage **exterior renovations** that are consistent with the character of the neighborhood.
5. Encourage owners of houses that are eligible for the **local historic preservation** program to enroll.
6. Keep the **business node** at Farwell and Washington Streets within its current boundaries.
7. Control **parking in front yards** of houses.
8. Keep **municipal facilities** in good conditions, including streets, sidewalks, street trees and street lights.
9. Encourage the **University** to help its off-campus **students** to be good and considerate neighbors.
10. Require **rental landlords** to properly maintain their properties, including trash removal and snow shoveling.
11. Study and improve pedestrian **street crossings** at key locations.
12. Help keep the **neighborhood association** a strong advocate for the needs of the area; consult the association on any land use applications or public works before the City that may affect it.



**Figure 10-15: Pattern of Land Use in the Third Ward Neighborhood**